



CDSS

CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SERVICES

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 7, 2006

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STATE CELEBRATES “KIDS DAY AT THE CAPITOL”

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and Prevent Child Abuse California today joined hundreds of children, families and local organizations from around the state for “Kids Day at the Capitol” to showcase community involvement in keeping children safe. This event is held annually to help educate people about child abuse and outline prevention and intervention strategies for parents, caregivers and the community.

“Children deserve to live in safe, stable homes where they can thrive and become healthy, productive adults,” said Kimberly Belshé, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency. “This event underscores the Schwarzenegger Administration’s commitment to promoting the health and well-being of California’s children.”

Ensuring child safety is a top priority for the Governor. California this week secured an unprecedented federal child welfare waiver that will give counties financial flexibility in providing intervention and prevention services to assist children and families before tragedies like child abuse strike. The state will work with counties and community partners to implement this waiver to improve the safety and quality of life for California’s children.

In California alone, nearly 500,000 reports of child abuse and neglect occur each year. And the initial cost to taxpayers once a child is abused is immense: \$1.5 billion is spent each year on services for children who are abused or in danger. The cost to taxpayers and society continues to escalate because children who are abused, neglected or exploited are at high risk for school failure, drug addiction, juvenile crime, premature sexual activity and welfare dependency. Experts believe community involvement has a significant impact on lessening the negative consequences associated with child abuse.

“Keeping children safe is a shared community responsibility,” said Cliff Allenby, director of CDSS. “By raising awareness of the many community resources available, we can help children and families get the vital assistance they need before abuse occurs.”

The event emphasized community awareness of many prevention and intervention programs and highlighted the collaborative efforts of community advocates, legislators, social workers, parents, clinicians and partnership groups that work on behalf of abused and neglected children.

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"We are thankful for our state partners, including the Office of Child Abuse Prevention and the Attorney General's Office, who have worked tirelessly to advance the critical issue of child abuse prevention throughout the state," said Sheila Anderson, president of Prevent Child Abuse California.

Attorney General Bill Lockyer was among the featured speakers, who also included Elizabeth Valentine Phillips, a Stanford University student and strong advocate in the prevention of child abuse who spoke about her experience as a victim of shaken baby syndrome and the critical role played by community support groups in preventing child abuse and neglect.

Along with several fun-filled activities and resource exhibits, the winners of the second annual "Heroes for Kids Art Contest" were acknowledged. In keeping with the Governor's Healthy Nutrition Initiative, elementary and high school students were invited to submit artwork based upon the theme, "Keeping Us Safe and Healthy."

"Kids Day at the Capitol" is one of many events being held throughout the nation during April to commemorate Child Abuse Prevention Month, which emphasizes the importance of prevention awareness and helps to educate adults about their responsibilities in caring for children. Through the support of government, local groups and child abuse prevention councils and advocates, families learn to benefit from the help of strong, supportive neighborhoods and communities.

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